

Leo Sauvage

Paper on over-all defense policy. In an effort to pretend the Emperor had clothes, the government was reduced to binding the normally separate statements of the three services in one cover, prefaced with a single page devoted to over-all policy, the burden of which was that putting the three service papers together proved integration was so close that no discussion of general policy was needed. Present Conservative plans for more centralization, somewhat on the modern American model of a single defense ministry in a single building, therefore have general support in Parliament; and Labour, once in office, could be expected to move further in this direction.

Outside Help

Though it is rarely recognized, Labour is full of admiration for another feature of the modern American military scene: the wide use made of defense experts outside the official machine on both an informal and a contractual basis. This practice goes against a good deal of the grain in Britain, where officials keep things pretty much to themselves and where Parliament completely lacks Congress's ability to ferret out information. Parliament has no official defense committee and no way in which to confront military leaders directly. Lack of information is a long-standing Labour grievance. George Brown, former shadow defense minister, complained a few years ago, "We are given so little information in the House, less I think than anywhere in any democratic country in the world."

Not even a Labour government would be likely to surrender its executive privileges, and no one in Britain wants to emulate the American tendency to do all the washing in public. But the increasing complexity of defense policy, and in particular the degree to which, in an age of deterrence, the vital decisions have become matters of refined speculation rather than practical trial and error, have made obvious the need for encouraging debate and for tapping every conceivable source of intelligent advice. Already there are scattered tributes to this realization in Britain, almost all on American models. Most notable is the Institute for Strategic Studies, much influ-

enced and indeed in large part financed by Americans. One or two of the universities have at last recognized defense studies, and a committee has recently been considering whether some aspects of the venerable Royal United Service Institution might not be rescued from oblivion.

OF THE two parties, Labour is by far the more receptive to such notions. To some extent Labour's relative lack of the intimate relations the Conservatives traditionally enjoy with the service leaders may foster a desire to cultivate independent opinions. But direct American influence on Labour has also been peculiarly strong. Years of opposition have given Labour leaders like Denis Healey, Richard Crossman, George Brown, the late John Strachey, and others leisure to visit and read the works of the thriving American community of academic strategists. These are also an invaluable source of political ammunition for an opposition largely cut off by official secrecy from information on military matters in its own country. Many of the awkward questions Labour asks are based on Senate hearings or RAND reports.

If Labour gets in, it will undoubtedly encourage defense studies in Britain and try to make the official machine more receptive to them. Healey is the new shadow defense minister, and whatever their formal offices, Crossman and Brown will no doubt have much to say on defense policy. Above all, Harold Wilson himself, who will certainly pay close attention to military matters, is receptive to a wide range of strategic debate. Labour leaders have in fact already given ear to a kind of private brain trust, including such men as Professor Michael Howard, who has been making war studies a respectable activity at London University.

There is also an interesting dark horse in the person of George Wigg, a Labour M.P. who rose from the ranks to be a colonel and has for almost twenty years nursed the interests of the army from a back bench. A mine of information, Wigg has never been taken as seriously as he deserves. Now a curious set of accidents leads those in the

know to cite Wigg as potentially one of the most powerful of all backstage advisers. In the first place, Wigg played a prominent part in Wilson's campaign for the leadership against George Brown. Secondly, the troubles of British nuclear policy and Labour's advocacy of conventional forces vindicate Wigg's long battles for the army. Finally, but by no means least, it was no other than George Wigg who first dragged the Christine Keeler case into the parliamentary light. This coup, which handed Labour the political issue of a lifetime, has sharply enhanced Wigg's reputation for political judgment. His position thus seems a strong one and, so long as it is, the British Army and conventional weapons will not lack a voice at court. Wigg, despite his practical background, is also a great proponent of strategic studies: ". . . we cannot get our defense policies right," he said recently, "unless we do it against the background of an informed public opinion. The Americans have been able to do what they have done and to carry through very drastic measures because in almost every university there now is a group studying the impact of strategy and working out its consequences."

The Mediators' Visions

At first sight it would seem that the U.S. administration would have an easier life with Labour than with the Conservatives so far as military matters are concerned. Labour's readiness to discard the national nuclear deterrent and build up conventional forces exactly corresponds to American urging. But any expectation of clear sailing with Labour must be tempered with a few reservations. There is much ambivalence in Labour's outlook. Labour's proposals for the joint control of allied forces and the cessation of independent European nuclear efforts would entail complex and disruptive negotiations. At any time Labour's own suppressed divisions on these matters might erupt again to make a Labour government an inflexible and awkward partner. Clearly it is Douglas-Home's hope that, by sharpening the defense issue, he can reopen the rifts within his opponents' camp.

More particularly, it is not gen-

erally realized in the United States how deep is the fascination in the Labour Party—and indeed in Britain as a whole—with schemes to resolve military dilemmas and tensions by a major political settlement in Central Europe involving some form of disengagement. One of the most widely studied schemes of disengagement is named after the late Hugh Gaitskell. In 1958 the present Labour defense spokesman, Denis Healey, wrote a pamphlet on “A Neutral Belt in Europe.” Only last summer Wilson endorsed the Oder-Neisse line and advocated “a proposal involving a measure of disengagement, for example a willingness to take the Rapacki plan as a basis for negotiations,” though he has been careful to say schemes weakening western defenses are unacceptable.

Those who know Wilson well say these projects are close to his heart. Policies of this kind appeal to many elements in Labour's tradition: to devotion to peacemaking, to eagerness for economy on defense, to residual feelings from the Dulles era that America is excessively rigid, to visions of glory won as mediator, and to reluctance to let Germans call the tune in western policy. Here again is ambivalence in Labour's attitude. On the one hand, Wilson has taken a lead in trying to end the coolness between his party and the German Social Democrats. On the other hand, fear of Germany is at the center of opposition to the multilateral force. Wilson gave a glimpse of Labour emotion when he said any measure of German control over nuclear weapons would be “as much a turning point in history, as much a fateful milestone on the road to a third world war as Hitler's march into the Rhineland was towards the last war.”

Almost certainly a Labour government, encouraged by what it believes to be the rising tide of the Left in Western Europe and of what it is hoped may be liberalism behind the Iron Curtain, would insistently reopen this theme of disengagement and political settlement. Many of the current preoccupations of strategic debate in the alliance would seem trifling compared to the reverberations of a determined initiative for disengagement.

AT HOME & ABROAD



Oswald in Dallas: A Few Loose Ends

LEO SAUVAGE

PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY was assassinated on Friday, November 22, 1963, in Dallas, Texas. A week later I wrote a dispatch to my paper in Paris setting forth my conviction that this is just about the only fact of which one can be absolutely certain. This is not to say that I consider Lee Harvey Oswald innocent. But having covered the story as a working journalist on the scene, I must say that I cannot accept as proven facts the incoherent conglomeration of circumstantial evidence against him that was pieced together by the Dallas police—and immediately divulged to the world—in the first days after the crime.

The Man in the Lunchroom

There are a number of loose ends in the account of the crime as unfolded by the Dallas police. One of the most disturbing concerns Oswald's movements immediately after the assassination.

From the very start, an extraordinary failure to follow the most elementary police routine irreparably affected the search for truth. Any good policeman automatically says

“Everyone stay where he is” when he goes into a building from which shots have been fired. Why wasn't the Texas School Book Depository immediately surrounded and then thoroughly searched?

The murderer, let us not forget, was on the sixth floor; the window from which he had shot had been immediately located by witnesses who had seen a rifle. One of them even stated that he had seen a man with the rifle. In any case, Police Chief Jesse E. Curry remarked in a television interview that he had been able to tell by the sound of the firing where the shots had come from, and he added that he had “right away” given orders over his car radio that the building be “surrounded and searched.” Boasting about the efficiency of his men, who had arrested Oswald less than two hours after the crime, Chief Curry, even on Saturday, still saw nothing upsetting in the fact that Oswald had not been arrested when he walked out the front door of the very building that was so efficiently surrounded and searched by the police. Chief Curry seemed to think

that the fact that Oswald had been identified as an employee was sufficient explanation.

On this point we were given several different versions of what took place, all of them by Chief Curry or his assistants and all of them over television. Finally, an official version was apparently agreed upon. According to the Dallas authorities, Oswald was found by the police in the second-floor lunchroom as he stood holding a bottle of Coca-Cola next to a soft-drink vending machine. He was seen there by a motorcycle policeman who had been the first to enter the building right after the shooting. The officer ran up the staircase, revolver in hand, with Roy S. Truly, manager of the Depository. He stopped at the entrance to the lunchroom, but continued to run upstairs as soon as Truly told him that Oswald worked in the building.

When Oswald left the building soon afterwards, nobody even asked him his name. What were the dozens of policemen doing? Many of the reporters covering the story asked themselves this question the day after the crime, and the fact that I. Karpets, head of the All-Union Institute for Studying Crime, also asked it in *Izvestia* on November 27 does not render the question any less relevant. For if Oswald was able to leave the building it is clear that others could have left it too. In short, the unbelievable carelessness of the Dallas police has left open a possibility that the assassin was some unidentified person who was also in the building at the moment of the shooting and who left undetected.

The lunchroom episode contains other disturbing aspects. According to Roy Truly's testimony, which has been confirmed by all known facts, the motorcycle policeman entered the building right after the shooting, and only a few seconds later he and Truly reached the second-story landing. At that moment, we are told officially, Oswald was already in the small lunchroom with a Coca-Cola bottle in his hand. This means that, assuming he was the assassin, he had to cross the floor from the window where the shots were fired to the opposite side of the building in order to reach the staircase (after concealing the rifle behind some

packing boxes), run down four flights of stairs, walk to the lunchroom, put a dime in the vending machine, and open the bottle. Truly and the motorcycle policeman did not report that Oswald was panting or showed other signs of having been running.

In those first few hours, did the Dallas police make any attempt to reconstruct as precisely as possible, stopwatch in hand, the minimum time needed by Oswald to reach the lunchroom from the sixth floor and to compare that time with the maximum time it took for Truly and the motorcycle policeman to reach the same spot? One thing is certain: at the moment when Chief Curry and District Attorney Henry Wade were proclaiming their absolute conviction that Oswald was guilty, they had not bothered to investigate these details. Subsequently, the FBI made a careful check on who was present in the building on Friday, November 22, at 12:30. But the local authorities continued to reveal their total confusion on this point in the statements they made on tv. Chief Curry, for instance, in one of his numerous interviews, said on Saturday that Lee Oswald was in the lunchroom—"among others." But those "others" were never mentioned again. And on Saturday night, when the chief of the Dallas homicide squad, Captain Will Fritz, indicated that the crime was solved as far as he was concerned—"It's a cinch"—he mentioned the fact that Oswald was in the building to support his belief. But Oswald was not alone in the building.

The Chicken Bones

Captain Fritz announced on television Friday afternoon that a piece of half-eaten chicken, a paper bag with chicken bones, an empty Coca-Cola bottle, and a cigarette pack had been found by the window from which the shots were fired. It presumably followed, therefore, that the murderer had settled down for a long wait, well before the passage of the Presidential motorcade. Pointing out that the sixth floor was used for dead storage, Jack C. Cason, president of the Texas School Book Depository, confirmed that someone could perfectly well have remained hidden there for several days without being discovered.

That same Friday afternoon, Captain Fritz stated before the tv cameras that Oswald had refused to join the other employees and go down to the street to watch the President pass by. Captain Fritz did not mention the chicken bones, and not one of the reporters crowding into the third floor of the Dallas police headquarters asked him any questions on this subject. But if his statement demonstrated Oswald's presence in the building, it also demonstrated that he was with other employees until very soon before the motorcade passed. Did this leave him time to take his rifle from where it had been concealed, get into position at the window, and—even supposing he was quite hungry—set out a meal and proceed to eat it? If not, did the chicken bones indicate the presence of someone else near the window from which the shots had been fired?

The examination of such hypotheses might well lead nowhere. But surely they should have been considered in any adequate investigation. And yet, just as soon as it became evident that the chicken bones raised a number of problems, they disappeared completely from the television repertory of the Dallas police. I regret that this incident should have provided a Soviet criminologist with the opportunity to remind us that a suspect can be identified by the tooth marks left in a piece of chicken.

On Wednesday, November 27, I spoke about the chicken bones to James Bowie, first assistant Dallas District Attorney. He said he was surprised that the question should interest me and dismissed it with a wave of the hand: "Oh, that chicken! It was old. Oswald didn't eat it. The bones weren't fresh. Someone had it the day before. . . ."

"Have you found the person who went to eat a chicken the day before the President was killed near the window from which the shots were fired?"

"I don't know. I don't believe so."

"Did the police look for him?"

"I think so. . . ."

The City Map

The news conference called by Dallas District Attorney Henry Wade for Sunday evening, November 24, was a real news conference as distin-



guished from the many improvised declarations that various local authorities had been making for forty-eight hours after the assassination of the President.

Mr. Wade was not improvising. The killing of Oswald, right in the headquarters of the police whose duty it was to hold him, by a dubious character well known to the same police department, had shaken public confidence in the way the investigation of the President's death was being conducted. The press conference was called in order to stop a ground swell of criticism and indignation by setting forth the evidence that permitted Wade to conclude: "There is no question that he [Oswald] was the killer of President Kennedy."

The district attorney opened the conference by stating, "I am going through the evidence piece by piece for you." But his orderly listing of the evidence never got beyond the first item; all the other "proofs" were soon mixed up in an incredible disorder that made any kind of itemized sequence impossible. When the newspapermen gathered that Wade had just about reached the end of his statement, one of them

asked him what was the "startling evidence" the police maintained they had discovered Saturday morning. Wade's answer was, "I don't know. That wasn't me that said that. . . ."

But that evening the early edition of the *Dallas Morning News* revealed the nature of the "startling" discovery of Saturday morning: the police had found in Oswald's rented room a map of the city of Dallas on which various intersections through which the Presidential motorcade would pass were marked with crosses and on which the plaza in front of the Texas School Book Depository was marked not only with a cross but also with a line corresponding to the trajectory of the bullets fired. How could such an important piece of evidence be ignored or forgotten, or intentionally omitted by the district attorney in the press conference he called to set forth "the evidence piece by piece"? Newspapermen hurried to the telephones. They were unable to reach Wade, but his principal assistant, James Bowie, told them that he knew nothing whatever about the map. On Monday morning, however, District Attorney Wade, without further explanation,

officially confirmed the discovery of the marked map. That map is one of the key documents in the dossier of Lee Harvey Oswald. It is also, it seems to me, one of the most dubious.

TO BEGIN WITH, the conditions under which this sensational proof was discovered, preserved, mentioned, omitted, ignored, made public, and finally confirmed by the authorities were very odd indeed. The presence of a map of Dallas in Oswald's room had been noted after the first search by the police on Friday afternoon: Mrs. Earlene Roberts, the landlady, mentioned it to newspapermen who asked her what the police had taken from the house. There was nothing unusual in the fact that Oswald had in his possession a map of the city. But surely it was unusual that the police, having found a map of Dallas among the suspect's possessions on Friday, should have waited till the next day before unfolding the map and examining it carefully. Nevertheless, that seems to be what the police must have done, since when Chief Curry spoke to the reporters on Saturday afternoon about the "startling evidence" he held in reserve, he told them that it had been discovered just that morning. Where, then, was the map between Friday afternoon, when Mrs. Roberts saw the police remove it from Oswald's room, and the dramatic moment on Saturday when the police discovered that the map was marked with crosses and a line showing the trajectory of the bullets that killed the President?

I do not mean to insinuate that anyone tampered with the document. But this is surely the sort of question that would have been pursued relentlessly by any halfway competent defense attorney—and that could have made a shambles of the case against the man accused of committing one of the foulest crimes ever known.

In killing Oswald, the proprietor of a strip-tease joint has denied us the trial that was required. But even if Oswald had lived, I do not see how he could have been convicted, or the conviction upheld on appeal, after an investigation like the one I watched being performed by the Dallas police.